



ENCA Press Release

21th ENCA Meeting Held in Prague, on April 3-6, 2014.

At the 21st international European Network of Childbirth Associations (ENCA) meeting in Prague, comprising 26 representatives of childbirth organisations, from 12 European countries. Members expressed their concerns about:

Medicalisation of birth - The over-medicalisation of birth has resulted in women and babies being put at additional risk, as evidenced by the BirthPlace Study(1) in the UK and the studies in Germany and the Netherlands.

We are especially concerned to note the following serious issues:

- Centralisation of obstetric care resulting in over-medicalisation of birth
- Serious shortage of midwives
- Inadequate opportunities for women to engage midwives who practice normal birth
- Persecution of women and midwives who choose to birth outside hospital systems
- Inadequate financial remuneration for midwives practicing normal birth

Caesarean sections - it was noted that in every country represented the caesarean section rates are unacceptably high. The WHO has noted that there is no health improvement for either mother or baby when the caesarean section rates exceed 10%. This problem is a serious public health issue with long-term adverse effects on both mother and baby.

Midwifery care - It was also noted that many countries have poor midwifery services and shortages of midwives.

ENCA members also expressed their considerable concern about the numbers of skilled midwives who have been prosecuted for attending home births. If there is an adverse outcome at home the midwife is prosecuted, yet adverse outcomes in hospital are rarely investigated, let alone prosecuted. In the Czech Republic it is not even possible to prosecute an individual obstetrician, only the hospital.

Quality maternity care provided by skilled midwives in the community has been shown to have multiple positive outcomes.

Freestanding midwifery units - Research has shown that that optimum maternity care is provided by freestanding midwifery units yet in so many countries these units are under threat of closure. Particularly, in Germany, France and the UK, while in other countries they do not even exist. For example; the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain and Portugal.



While midwives throughout Europe are unable to obtain insurance to cover birth out of hospital quality maternity care cannot be provided and women are denied the choice of place of birth.

We urge all European Governments to support and encourage the establishment of community based maternity care in countries where it does not exist; and actively support those areas where there are already some services; and address the failure to ensure that all midwives are able to obtain affordable insurance cover.

Reference:

- (1) Brocklehurst P. et al (2011) 'Perinatal and maternal outcomes by planned place of birth for healthy women with low risk pregnancies: the Birthplace in England national prospective cohort study' BMJ [343:bmj.d7400](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.d7400).

About ENCA

The European Network of Childbirth Associations was launched 1993 in Frankfurt, Germany on the initiative of the German partners "GfG," which stays for "Society for childbirth education". ENCA is a network of organisations campaigning for improvements in perinatal care for mothers and babies. The consumer activists, parents and childbirth educators who join ENCA, recognise the necessity of developing strategies to improve conditions in pregnancy, birth and for the post partum period throughout Europe.

For more detailed information, please contact:

*ENCA- Spain
Asociación El Parto es Nuestro*

*www.elpartoesnuestro.es
prensa@elpartoesnuestro.es
Móvil: 634 567 658
Diana Montero
Coordinadora de Comunicación y Prensa*